UNITED
NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.
GENERAL

CEDAW/C/RWA/3*
25 February 1991

ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women (CEDAW)

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Third periodic reports of States parties

RWANDA

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* For the initial report submitted by the Government of Rwanda, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.13; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.37 and CEDAW/C/SR.41, and Official Records of the General Assembly, thirty-ninth session Supplement No. 45 (A/39/45), paras. 236-276; for second periodic report submitted by the Government of Rwanda, see CEDAW/C/13/Add.13 and CEDAW/C/13/Add.13/Amend.1; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.181, and Official Records of the General Assembly, forty-sixth session Supplement No. 46 (A/46/38), paras. 224-249.

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PART ONE

(a) General social, economic, political and legal framework in which the Rwandese Government is tackling the question of the elimination of discrimination against women

1. The comments made in the second report under this heading remain valid. However, in addition, it has been considered appropriate to indicate below the social and economic factors which are handicapping the effective application of the Convention in Rwanda.

2. Situated in the centre of Africa and land-locked, Rwanda is bounded on the north by Uganda, on the south by Burundi, on the east by Tanzania, and on the west by Zaire. With a population at present estimated at 7,336,000, on a total area of 26,338 km^2, Rwanda remains one of the most densely populated countries of Africa. Of the total area of the country, only 17,758 km^2 of land are usable for farming or stock-raising.

3. The mean altitude of the country is 1,800 m. The annual rainfall varies between 1,000 mm and 1,400 mm on the central plateaux, and amounts to 1,600 mm in the west and 800 mm in the eastern savanna. Climatic vagaries are frequent, and disorganize agricultural operations or endanger crops.

4. As at 1 January 1989, the Rwandese population was estimated at 7,082,246 persons, of whom 51 per cent were women, 50 per cent were less than 15 years of age, 60 per cent less than 20 years of age, and 4.15 per cent more than 60 years of age. The rate of increase of the population is 3.7 per cent per year. The vast majority of the inhabitants, 95 per cent, live in the country and cultivate family plots. Agriculture represents the first and principal source of foreign exchange for the country. The commercial crops involved are coffee and tea.

5. The gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated in 1984 at $US 290 and in 1989 at $US 370 per head. The distribution of GDP by activity in 1989 was estimated at 93 per cent in the primary sector, 2.8 per cent in industry and 4.2 per cent in services.

6. The country is at present undergoing a crisis which, internally, is aggravated by:

- The agricultural yields, which are seriously compromised by the high density and high rate of growth of the population, the continuing erosion of the soils and the fragmentation of agricultural holdings, thus rendering more intense production difficult. This poor performance in terms of agricultural production has recently been made worse by the caprices of the climate and by plant diseases;
- The poor performance of the import-substitution manufacturing industry, characterized by low added value and high consumption of imported raw materials;
- The absence of possibilities of diversification for the Rwandese economy, which depends basically on coffee for more than 80 per cent of its income from exports;

- The poor performance of public undertakings and joint undertakings with strong State participation, whose loss-making management forces the Government to grant them substantial financial assistance drawn from public funds.

The effects of the crisis

7. The crisis has its impact on economic growth and the welfare of the population.

8. While the real GDP had registered a moderate growth during the years 1982-1986, the situation deteriorated alarmingly as from 1987, when rates of growth became more and more negative. The rate of growth of the GDP was -0.6 per cent in 1987, -3.4 per cent in 1988 and an estimated -6.3 per cent in 1989. With a population growth rate of 3.7 per cent, the real GDP per inhabitant has thus exhibited a negative trend, of respectively -4.3 per cent, -7.1 per cent and -10 per cent over the last three years.

9. The decline in economic activity is reflected in a decline in the income of households, particularly in the country, and of the public sector.

(b) Legal and other measures adopted in implementation of the Convention

10. The measures indicated under this heading in the second report remain applicable.

(c) Institutions or authorities responsible for ensuring adherence in practice to the principle of equality between men and women

11. In addition to the institutions described in this connection in the second report, it should be noted that as from 1989 the Ministry of the Interior was instructed to monitor the application of the Convention.

(d) Methods used to promote and ensure the comprehensive development and progress of women in order to guarantee them the exercise and enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms in all fields on the basis of equality with men

12. The methods described in the second report, namely census, developing awareness, and surveys, together with the accompanying observations, remain applicable.

PART TWO. SPECIFIC INFORMATION CONCERNING EACH PROVISION OF THE CONVENTION

Article 2: Legislative and regulatory measures adopted by the Rwandese Government in order to eliminate discrimination against women

13. The legislative measures described in the second report of Rwanda remain in force. It should nevertheless be noted that the Rwandese Family Code referred to in the second report in connection with this article has already been adopted by the National Development Council (NDC) and promulgated by Law No. 42/1988 of 27 October 1988. However, the Code is not yet in force, and will begin to yield its effects only after authorization by the President of the Republic.

Articles 3 and 4: Measures taken to ensure the full development and progress of women and to accelerate the establishment of de facto equality between men and women

14. The fresh information which should be added to the material contained in the second report on these articles is that the statutes of URAMA have now been adopted. It should also be noted that in December 1989 the first Congress of URAMA was held, and appointed the Executive Office (Bureau Exécutif) of the organization.

It may be recalled that the purpose of URAMA (article 3 of the statutes) is to encourage active contribution by Rwandese women to the efforts to bring about the social, economic and cultural development of the country.

15. The aims of URAMA include:

- Working for the protection and flourishing of the family by helping to find solutions for the specific problems of women;
- The establishment of favourable conditions enabling the Rwandese woman more effectively to play her part as citizen, worker and mother, making proper use of and fostering her skills, both domestic and professional, and encouraging and supporting her initiatives;
- The implementation in the Rwandese woman of a more lively awareness of her duties and her rights, and the strengthening of her sense of responsibility;
- Assistance to the Rwandese woman in enhancing and promoting Rwandese culture;
- The development and strengthening of bonds of friendship and co-operation with other organizations fighting for the progress of mankind in general and of women in particular.

16. In an effort effectively to achieve these objectives, URAMA has, inter alia, put forth efforts to remove the great obstacle hindering the development of women, namely illiteracy. In this context, the Executive Office of URAMA has very recently launched a large-scale programme to eliminate illiteracy in women's socio-economic community groups.

Article 5: Measures taken to eliminate prejudices and customary practices based on the idea of the inferiority of women to men, and measures taken to ensure the recognition of the joint responsibility of men and women in the upbringing of their children

17. With particular respect to the education of children, the second report of Rwanda describes the current legislative provisions imposing upon parents responsibility for bringing up their children.

18. Here mention should be made of the regular questioning of parents by the political and administrative authorities, to ensure that the former are appropriately discharging their parental duties.

19. Thus, for example, in closing the Fortnight devoted to the inauguration of projects in the country on 31 July 1990, the President castigated certain heads of family who had subsided into alcoholism, squandering on liquor their entire salary or all the money obtained from the sale of agricultural commodities, while at home the wife and children were writhing with hunger.

Article 6: Measures to suppress traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women

20. The legal provisions together with the administrative measures described in the second report remain in force.

Article 7: Measures taken to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country

21. There are changes to be made in the statistical tables contained in the second report, and the updated information on this subject is as follows:

Representation of women in decision-making bodies

Body	Representatives in 1990			
	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Central Committee of the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND)	3	23	26	11.5
Deputies to the National Development Council (CND)	12	58	70	17.1
Prefects	0	10	10	0
Prefecture Committee	14	226	240	6
Mayors	0	0	143	0
Commune councillors	17	1,472	1,489	1.1
Members of the Rural District Cells Committee	2,174	41,666	43,840	5
TOTAL	2,220	43,445	45,818	4.8

Distribution of students at the National University of Rwanda by faculty and by sex between 1987/88 and 1988/89

Faculty	Academic Year/Sex									
	1987/88					1988/89				
	M + F	M	F	% M	% F	M + F	M	F	% M	% F
Agronomy	113	108	5	95.6	4.4	123	116	7	94.3	5.7
Law	145	96	49	66.2	33.8	190	119	71	62.6	37.4
ESTM 1/	74	45	29	60.8	39.2	123	73	50	59.3	40.7
Humanities	311	260	51	83.6	16.4	399	329	70	82.5	17.5
Medicine	125	98	27	78.4	21.6	139	110	29	79.1	20.9
Exact sciences	271	246	25	90.8	9.2	340	289	51	85	15
Applied science	94	94	-	100	0	93	92	1	98.9	1.1
Education	181	131	50	72.4	27.6	188	126	62	67	33
SESG 2/	360	257	103	71.4	28.6	455	320	135	70.3	29.7

M: Male
F: Female

1/ ESTM: Higher Modern Technical College.

2/ SESG: Economic and Social Management Science.

Distribution of students in other higher educational institutions for the academic year 1987/88

Institution	Number	
	Male	Female
African and Mauritian Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (IAMSEA)	21	2
Mudende Adventist University (private)	48	5
College of Management and Information Science	39	31
Higher Catholic Institute of Applied Pedagogics (private)	18	-
Higher Institute of Financial Studies	164	47
Military College (ESM)	506	12

Article 11: Measures taken to eliminate discrimination in the field of employment

25. The legal and regulatory provisions described in the second report of Rwanda with the accompanying commentary remain applicable.

Article 12: Measures taken to improve women's health

26. Apart from the measures described in the second report under this item, the following should be noted.

27. Rwandese health policy remains oriented towards mass medicine offering priority care to the most vulnerable population groups, namely mothers and children. In this context the Rwandese Government has launched a health programme for promoting, inter alia, good feeding and nutritional practices, improved environmental quality, the supply of drinking water in rural areas and measures to protect the mother and child.

Article 13: Right to family benefits, bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, and the right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life

28. With particular regard to the right to bank loans and access to financial credit, an intense effort is being put forth by public and private institutions in our country with a view to increasing the awareness and the skills of women in entrepreneurial matters. The relevant project is being jointly executed by the African Research and Training Centre for Women (CARFF) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), supported by "DUTERIMBERE" (see comment in the second periodic report on this particular article) under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior and Communal Development.

The purposes of the project are to:

- Identify the problems associated with the development of enterprises and the access of women to credit;
- Awaken and enhance the entrepreneurial spirit among women;
- Make financial institutions aware of their role and responsibility;
- Open up for women opportunities of access to credit.

Article 14: Status of rural women

29. Rural women still constitute the majority of the female population in Rwanda. Their work, frequently taking the form of domestic chores (cooking, gathering wood, grinding cereals, fetching water, maintenance work, education of children) cannot be evaluated in monetary terms.

These tasks demand much time and energy from the woman, but nevertheless mean that she is still inadequately appreciated.

30. In addition to household work, the Rwandese rural woman engages in agriculture, small-scale stock-breeding and artisanal work.

31. The burden of all these tasks is made heavier by frequent and numerous pregnancies (5-8 children/woman on average) which often prevent the woman from following the training programmes provided by the Community Development and Continuing Education Centres (CCDFP) or by the nutrition centres.

32. Furthermore, the rural woman is subject to a very strict marital authority, which has the effect of keeping her continuously in an inferior position as regards taking decisions on family matters.

33. The Rwandese Government continues to help rural women to emerge from these difficulties by encouraging them to attend the CCDFPs and to join together in women's associations, so that they may acquire knowledge likely to assist them in solving their problems. It should be noted in this connection that the country at present has 876 women's associations, representing an increase of 383 associations since the transmittal of the second periodic report of Rwanda.

Article 15: Measures to ensure women's equality with men before the law. Legal capacity of Rwandese women

34. The provisions of the Rwandese Civil Code mentioned in the second report in this connection will remain in force until the Family Code begins to take effect.

Article 16: Measures taken to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations

35. In addition to the information supplied in the second report, particularly regarding the right of women to property, it should be noted that neither the Rwandese Civil Code nor the new Family Code regulate this matter. It is customary law which so far has been applicable on the subject, although it contains discriminatory provisions regarding women. For, according to Rwandese customary law, the woman has no right to property. When she leaves her own family upon marriage, she becomes part of the family of the spouse and contributes to the management of the latter's property.

36. It is a fact that the principal source of acquiring property is inheritance, from which, up to the present time, the Rwandese woman cannot benefit unless there are no male heirs. This lack of access to ownership places the Rwandese woman in a position of inferiority in marriage.

37. However, there are grounds for hoping that, with the progress of female entrepreneurship in our country, women may become big property owners on the same footing as men.